

Kingly Power and the Voice of God

By

Louis R. Torres

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The sounds of the winds of strife are blowing in the church. No doubt we are living in times of difficulty not only outside, but also within the walls of God's church. It appears that past issues resolved, are again being hashed over. One of those is this thing called "Kingly Power." Bear with me and allow a brief history lesson to shed some light on the issue.

Our denomination was not originally organized for several reasons. Let me outline the challenges prior to our official formation as a church.

- I. Organization prior to 1863.
 - A. Congregational -- what little there was of the church was congregational in nature.
 - B. Organization feared because of abuses in their former association with by their respective denominations.
 - C. Feared formalism and that church would become part of Babylon.
 - D. Post-1844 Advent believers were held together by common belief.
 1. Second coming.
 2. Sabbath.
 3. Sanctuary.
 4. Spirit of Prophecy.
 - E. Beginning in 1850 series of messages were written by E.G. White that believers must organize.
 - F. EGW looked back at experience in 1901 and wrote:
"As our numbers increased, it was evident that without some form of organization there would be great confusion, and the work would not be carried forward successfully. To provide for the support of the ministry, for carrying the work in new fields, for protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members, for holding church property, for the publication of the truth through the press, and for many other objects, organization was indispensable." (TM 26:2)
- II. Organization -- 1863.
 - A. General Conference session took place on May 20-23, 1863.
 - B. There were approximately 3,500 members in church living in central and New England states.
 - C. John Byington became the first GC president (May 20, 1863 to May 17, 1865).
 - D. GC committee of three was established. The members were:
 1. John Byington.
 2. J. N. Andrews.

3. G. W. Amandon.

As a result, the work grew rapidly. But soon it became obvious that problems developed from the rapid growth.

- A. Independent organizations were formed. They were:
 - 1) International Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association.
 - 2) International Sabbath School Association.
 - 3) International Tract Society.
 - 4) National Religious Liberty Association.
 - 5) Foreign Mission Board.
- B. All were independent of the GC.
- C. Dr. J. H. Kellogg was aggressive with his medical enterprises.
 - 1) Had strong medical program.
 - 2) Sending out own missionaries.
 - 3) No connection with church.
 - 4) Tried to bring other health institutions under his control.
 - 5) By 1901, had 2,000 people on payroll.
 - 6) Church had 1,500 in all lines of work.

III. Then the famous 1888 General Conference session convened.

- A. O. A. Olsen elected president, Oct. 17, 1888.
- B. Jones and Waggoner presented messages on righteousness by faith, Conference management and decisions and methods of handling the work.
- C. A Number of leading men rose up against Jones and Waggoner.
 - 1. Because EGW supported them on this point they opposed her.
 - 2. These men managed to get her a call to Australia.
 - 3. Gradually some of these leading men accepted the message of righteousness by faith and put support behind Sr. White.
 - 4. However, some did not.
- D. Two or three of these men were accepted by Olsen as his key advisors.

IV. Situation between 1888 and 1901.

- A. A. R. Henry
 - 1. GC treasurer 1883-88
 - 2. From 1882-1897 involved with treasury of SDA Pub. Assoc. at Battle Creek.
 - 3. Between 1893 and 1895 he was both treasurer and manager.
 - 4. Simultaneously he was a member of nearly all early SDA medical and educational institutions in the Central and Western states.
- B. Harmon Lindsay.
 - 1. Treasurer of GC from 1874-75 and 1888-93.
 - 2. Participated in establishment of Battle Creek and Oakwood Colleges.
 - 3. Served as treasurer of several institutions.
 - 4. Among them R&H in the 1890's.

5. Left church and became Christian Scientist.

C. Clement Eldridge.

1. Publishing and religious liberty leader.
2. 1887 name appears as auditor of R&H.
3. 1889-92 or 93 general manager of R&H.
4. Then left and joined private publishing firm in Chicago.

D. These men, and others under their influence, worked contrary to God's purposes and the counsels through EGW. They were able to sweep O. A. Olsen with them:

"Elder Olsen's advisers [Wrote Mrs. White] were blinding his eyes so that he should see through the eyes of these men who were preaching under a deception." (Ms. 33, 1891)

E. Problems manifested in several ways

1. They had no intention of carrying out what was voted by boards (Ms. 33, 1891, p. 1)

"But men, human men, have had a settled determination to carry out their own devisings as if the Lord had authorized them to do this work. Men were working upon principles that God has condemned, which God will not accept, but in the great day of God He will say, 'Who has required this work at your hands?' " (Ms. 57, 1895)

2. Olsen sent them to advise and counsel when they were not consecrated to God.

"It has been a mystery to me how Eld. Olsen could receive and sanction two men [A. R. Henry and Harmon Lindsay] of similar religious character, when he has no evidence that they are consecrated to God." (Lt. 2, 1894, p. 2)

"The Lord has a controversy with them, and yet Eld. Olsen treats them as representative men, sending them hither and thither as men of discernment, endorsing them as trustworthy and reliable men, to whom the people shall listen and show respect as the voice of God in the conference." (Lt. 2, 1894, p. 6)

3. This is when the term, "Kingly power" was used by EGW in describing the dealing of these men and what motivated them.

"Over and over again men have said 'The voice of the conference is the voice of God; therefore everything must be referred to the conference. The conference must permit or restrict in the various lines of work.' As the matter has been presented to me, there is a narrow compass, and within this narrow compass all the entrances to which are locked, are those who would like to exercise kingly

power. But the work carried on all over the field demands an entirely different course of action." (Ms. 43, 1901, pp. 1, 2)

"Everything that has been planned in regard to consolidation shows that men are seeking to grasp the scepter of power, and hold control over human minds. But God does not work with them in their devising, and the voice they now have in the cause **of God is not the voice of God.** They have proved themselves utterly unworthy of a place as wise managers; for their strength is used to turn men away from their rights to benefit themselves." (Lt. 78, 1896, p. 13)

4. R&H cheat authors out of royalties.
5. All decisions for whole work were made by these few men – though the GC committee by 1901 was made up of 13 men.
6. They refuse to be worked by the Holy Spirit and turned away from obeying God's Word.

"Men have seemed determined to place the mould and superscription of their human wisdom upon the work of God. They refused to be worked by the Holy Spirit, and brought in their own wisdom and devising. The result of this has been seen in various ways. The sacred character of the cause of God is no longer realized at the center of the work. The voice from Battle Creek, which has been regarded as authority in counseling how the work should be done, is no longer the voice of God; but it is the voice of -- whom?" (Lt. 4, 1896, p. 6)

"You have thought that whatever your councils decided, would stand as the voice of God; but this supposition must no longer exist. You have the Word of God; you have the message which God has given; but you have turned away from obeying this Word." (Lt. 7, 1896, p.1, 2, unpublished)

- F. During this period, when these men were the sole self-appointed authority for the church is when EGW speaks of the voice of the GC no longer being the voice of God.

"This is the reason I was obliged to take the position that there was not the voice of God in the General Conference." 17MR 166.2

Plans would be devised that God did not sanction and yet Elder Olsen made it appear that the decisions of the General Conference were as the voice of God. Many of the positions taken, going forth as the voice of the General Conference, have been the voice of one, two, or three men who were misleading the conference." (Ms. 33, 1891, p. 1, 2, unpublished)

- G. EGW's heart went out to Elder Olsen, yet she did not excuse him for his mistakes.

"I have the tenderest sympathy for your president, Elder Olsen. I know his soul is weighed down with burdens; and unless those connected with him have the Holy Spirit's guidance, mistakes of a serious character will be made." (Lt. 2, 1894, p. 2, unreleased letter sent to 1895 GC session)

- V. During this time others arose to declare that it was time to leave the church by denouncing the church as Babylon.

- A. During this time Stanton and Caldwell published a tract.

1. The Loud Cry! Babylon Fallen!
2. Stated that the SDA Church was Babylon.
3. Referred to the Loud cry of Rev., to "come out of them My people" is a call out of SDA church.

- B. EGW's reply (R&H, Nov. 8, 1956)

"These people are not Babylon; for thou hast given to them righteousness and peace; and thy joy, that their joy may be full.'" (Ms. 21, 1893, p. 3)

"How could you (Stanton) come from that meeting where the power of God was revealed in so marked a manner, and proclaim that the loud cry was that the commandment-keeping people were Babylon?"

(Ms. 21, 1893, p. 3, 4)

"I have no such message to give; but one of an entirely different character." (Ms. 21, 1893, p. 5)

"Beware of those who arise with a great burden to denounce the church. The chosen ones who are standing and breasting the storm of opposition from the world, and are uplifting the downtrodden Commandments of God to exalt them as holy and honourable, are indeed the light of the world.

"How dare mortal man pass his judgement upon them and call the church a harlot, Babylon, a den of thieves...." (Ms. 21, 1893, p.6)

"When any one is drawing apart from the organized body of God's commandment-keeping people they begin to weigh the church in their human scales and begin to pronounce judgement against them. Then you may know that God is not leading them. They are on the wrong track." (Ms. 21, 1893, p. 8)

- C. More can be read about church not being Babylon in Testimonies to Ministers and "The Remnant Church".

- VI. Interesting dynamics.

- A. Though in a mess the Adventist were still His people.

- B. God was reproving His church.
 - C. Working His will by protecting it and resolving the problems.
- VII. This Kingly Power was exercised until the GC session in 1901.
- A. A complete reorganization took place that corrected the weaknesses of previous years. "That these men should stand in a sacred place, to be as the voice of God to the people, as we once believed the General Conference to be -- that is past. What we want now is a reorganization. We want to begin at the foundation, and to build upon a different principle." (GC Bulletin, April 3, 1901, pp. 24-26)
 - B. Steps of reorganization.
 1. The GC committee was enlarged
 2. All the separate independent entities were brought together under leadership of the GC.
 3. Departments within the GC were established to supervise these activities.
 4. Set up Union conferences.
 5. Local and Union conferences were given the responsibilities of the daily work of various fields in opposition to having only three or four men attempting to control the daily work in their respective fields.
 - C. EGW's reaction to reorganization.

"During the General Conference the Lord wrought mightily for His people. Every time I think of that meeting, a sweet solemnity comes over me, and sends a glow of gratitude to my soul. We have seen the stately steppings of the Lord our Redeemer. We praise His holy name; for He has brought deliverance to His people." (R&H, Nov. 26, 1901)
- VIII. After 1901 Edson White was still upset for the way that God's work had been micromanaged by these few men.
- A. Edson White -- still smarting from unjust dealings with R&H board quoted words of his mother penned prior to 1901 (Lt. 54, 1901). She wrote to him:

"I am again much burdened as I see you selecting words from writings that I have sent you, and using them to force decisions that the brethren do not regard with clearness... God desires us to understand that we are never to try to rule or to seek for the supremacy. Active humility and true goodness are to be constantly cherished. The spirit is to be softened and subdued. God will lead every one who will be led. My son, do not manifest a dictatorial spirit. Work with an eye single to the glory of God. Whatever may come into your experience, remember that the heavenly Father knows all things, and that He will set things in order, if we are not in too great a haste. He is our sanctification and righteousness." {19MR 147.1, 2}

"Your course would have been the course to be pursued if no change had been made in the General Conference. But a change has been made, and many more

changes will be made and great developments will be seen." (p. 1:2; MR #174 in Through Crisis to Victory, p. 194-5)

"It hurts me to think that you are using words which I wrote prior to the Conference. Since the Conference great changes have been made." (p. 3:2; MR #174, Through Crisis to Victory, p. 195)

"A terribly unjust course has been pursued in the past. Want of principle has been revealed. But in pity to his people God has brought about changes." (p. 4:1; MR #174, Through Crisis to Victory, p. 195)

"The course of action which before the Conference might have been a necessity, is no longer a necessity; for the Lord Himself interposed to set things in order. He has given His Holy Spirit. I am confident that He will set in order the matters that seem to be moving wrong." (p. 4:2; MR #174, Through Crisis to Victory, p. 195)

B. EGW repeatedly assured the people of God's love and guidance of His people.

1. "We cannot now step off the foundation that God has established. We cannot enter into any new organization; for this would mean apostasy from the truth." (Notebook Leaflets, The Church, No.1, written Dec. 24, 1905)

2. She concludes by reestablishing the authority of the church as once again being the voice of authority when in session. She wrote:

"At times, when a small group of men entrusted with the general management of the work have, in the name of the General Conference, sought to carry out unwise plans and to restrict God's work, I have said that I could no longer regard the voice of the General Conference, represented by these few men, as the voice of God. But this is not saying that the decisions of a General Conference composed of an assembly of duly appointed, representative men from all parts of the field should not be respected. God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference, shall have authority. {9T p. 260.2} 1909

Smart devil! There are those who have ignored the "voice of authority" charging that the GC session was not the voice of God, and continue to believe their course to be righteous, while casting accusations on those in harmony with the vote, and who are trying to keep order, as using "kingly power." How astute and sagacious his ploy to incite discord.

The General Conference leadership is under sacred obligation to respect that voice that has for the last three General Conference Sessions spoken on the issue of women ordination. Had the vote gone the other way, those now using the charge of "kingly power" would have expected the GC president to honor the vote by requiring compliance to the voice of the majority.

The church has vested authority to keep its members in harmony with Biblical principles. The unity of its people is one of those principles. When Joshua and Caleb were outvoted they did not go around and try to figure out a way to get support for their perspective, instead, they suffered 40 years in the wilderness silently waiting until God led His people in another direction.